



## HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES DEPARTMENT

Dori Zaleznik, MD, Commissioner

1294 Centre Street  
Newton, MA 02459-1544

Telephone 617.796.1420 Fax 617.552.7063  
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**Public Health**  
Prevent. Promote. Protect.

### **Bats and Rabies**

Bats are not blind, won't suck your blood, and in most cases, do not have rabies. They beneficially eat insects that can cause disease and damage crops. But they also tend to seek cooler areas inside homes during hot weather, causing fear.

Read on to learn more about how to keep bats out of homes and what to do if one makes its way inside. Don't let bats drive you batty!

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, about 6 percent of bats captured and tested were determined to have rabies. However, because rabies almost always is fatal, it is important to consult with a physician when possible exposure occurs.

Bats can spread rabies through a bite or scratch. A sleeping person, unattended child, mentally disabled person or intoxicated person is particularly vulnerable because the teeth and claws of bats are so small that a bite or scratch may leave only a very small mark. The wound may not bleed or hurt. Thus, a person may not realize an exposure has occurred. If it is possible humans or animals were exposed to a bat, it is important to capture the bat for rabies testing.

If a bat was physically present and exposure cannot be ruled out, the Massachusetts Department of Public Health recommends testing the bat for rabies. Newton residents should capture the bat, and bring it to the Health & Human Services Department in Newton Centre, where arrangements will be made to have the bat tested at the state lab in Jamaica Plain. You will be notified of the results and next steps.

To capture a bat:

- Wait until the bat has come to rest, wear heavy gloves to capture the bat in a jar, coffee can, plastic or other hard container.
- Mark with the name and address of the responsible person.
- Mark the container "live bat" if it is still alive.
- Store bats in the refrigerator until they can be brought in.
- Bring the bat to the Health and Human Services Department during regular business hours (8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m., Monday through Friday; Tuesdays until 8 p.m.) at 1294 Centre Street in Newton Centre.

Contact a pest control company to capture the bat if you are unable or unwilling to capture it yourself.

To prevent bats from entering a home:

City of Newton



Setti D. Warren  
Mayor

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- Make sure windows have screens, chimneys are capped, and electrical and plumbing openings are plugged.
- Do not leave unscreened doors and windows open.
- Seal openings larger than 5/8 inches by 7/8 inches to the attic, basement, walls or occupied areas of the house.
- Use materials such as expanding spray-on foam, caulk, wire mesh, wood that fits tightly, steel wool (around pipes that enter buildings), or polypropylene bird netting.
- Openings should not be sealed when bats are inside. This may drive them into occupied areas or create a sanitary problem if the bats are trapped and die inside.
- Consult a pest control company for bat proofing or removal services.

More information about bats and rabies is available by calling 617-796-1420 or visiting the Health and Human Services department website at [www.newtonma.gov](http://www.newtonma.gov).

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